

within a month from that date, and yet you have not told your readers anything of this great alteration."

Gentle reader, and most sapient writer, we have seen such paragraphs (and more) long ago—long enough ago, indeed, to disprove the last part of the statement, at all events,—but we saw in them but a flourish of words and no soundness. They were evidently nothing but a "come on if you dare," to those in whom the power of prevention might rest. We were very doubtful, and are very doubtful, of the right of any person to build upon this area, and the present state of things confirms our opinion. The few tumpory posts and planks which, stuck up in the ground, were the foundation of the foregoing flourishes, remain precisely as they were, a miserable eyesore; an injunction to prevent further proceedings has been obtained, it is said; and the "tiny shops" will, it may be hoped, get "small by degrees and beautifully less," until they disappear altogether. The idea of covering this space with buildings is perfectly preposterous, and, if it were likely, should be resolutely opposed by all London.*

THE FOUR O'CLOCK MOVEMENT.

A LETTER from "A Young Builder," which appeared in your paper of the 11th Inst., headed "The Four o'Clock Movement," having been brought under the notice of the London Operative House Painters' Association, I am directed by that body to offer a few remarks in reply to the inference to be drawn from it, viz., that the workmen in the building trade are a disorderly race. All must know that this is a libel on the working men of London. If we examine the police reports we shall find that but a very small proportion of those brought up for being drunk and disorderly are men connected with the building trade.

He says he has had much experience among workmen; if so, he knows that workmen in the building line are always at their post at six o'clock on Monday morning; when the reverse occurs it is an exception to the general rule. They who willingly grant the leisure have won for themselves the lasting gratitude of all classes of workmen, and they are fully compensated for any trifling pecuniary loss they may sustain by the increased satisfaction which exists between them and their men—by the conviction that they are moving with the age, which evidently tends towards diminishing the hours of labour, and that they are adding to that which is the happiest time in the life of a working man, viz., Saturday night in the bosom of his family.

He asks, in what way can the less favoured tradesman make up for the gross imposition? I would humbly suggest to the "Young Builder" to endeavour to promote its general adoption, and put the deficiency on the price of labour in his estimates. He would then find himself in as good a position as he holds at present (I), with the consolation that he was increasing the opportunities of his men for moral and intellectual improvement; he would be doing something that would create a good feeling between the employer and employe.

Trusting that in justice to the class to which I belong (whose character is publicly traduced by your correspondent), you will find a corner in your journal for these few lines, I am, Sir, on behalf of the London Operative House Painters' Association,

PILLAR WOOD, Secretary.

Ryder's-court, Leicester-square.

Much has been said in favour of this movement, and at first sight it appears very right,

at least to the working classes, and it would appear still better to leave off at four o'clock every day in the week, as the masons have now in contemplation; but the best of all would be, if we could, to *abandon work altogether*. Men would then have all their time to cultivate their minds, and we then might expect to find men of gigantic stature in intellectual powers, and of the highest moral cultivation. But fate subscribes not to our wishes. The original curse mixes its bitters with all our sweets,—by the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread. And as this fate is almost irresistible, a patient submission to the same will greatly soften its hardships, for the more we attempt to fly from labour the heavier its pressure becomes. The man that has none, perhaps labours under the heaviest burthen; for such a man is a burthen to himself and to all those around him; whilst, on the other hand, labour will strengthen the body, invigorate the mind, make time pass cheerfully, preserve the health better than medicine, and create a purer appetite than any stimulant; it will give sound rest when asleep, and true enjoyment for recreation; whilst those who have not anything to do and are in the possession of all good things, for the want of this ingredient are never truly satisfied, and have no true enjoyment of anything. The man who labours has the fewest temptations to evil. His employment is honourable; he labours to help himself, he also contributes to the well-being of others; by his exertions our barns and storehouses are filled with plenty. Among the mighty he is the mightiest. For he levels the mountains and penetrates through the hills; constructs a way by which you are carried with the rapidity of the wind; he erects a barrier, and quells the raging of the sea, and secures to the mariner a safe haven of repose. He builds our temples, our palaces, our houses, and decorates the same with the most curious workmanship. Among the gallant he is the bravest; he ploughs through the stormy ocean in search of foreign goods; he penetrates the bowels of the earth, and furnishes us with all our glittering store; in short, he is the principal instrument of producing all our wealth and all our good. Use him fairly, despise him not; remember, although he be thy servant, he is not thy slave. Govern him, but let it be without rigour; and, as the labourer is worthy of his hire, defraud him not, lest thou bring the hireling's curse upon thee.

Now to the point, viz., the four o'clock movement. Let us take a survey on both sides. The "Young Carpenter" states, that there has not yet been time to develop its benefits; it must therefore remain as yet, according to this concession, a matter of speculation as to its good or ill effects. All that can be said in its favour is, that it is approved of by many of the building trades, and will promote the mental cultivation of the men. I might, for instance, propose to the public another good thing, that if employers would pay their men on Fridays,—it would be more conducive to the working man's comforts than the four o'clock movement; but the result, in all probability, would be, that many would squander their money and time on Saturdays on the account of it.

Above all things, I like honesty. If the excuses on the behalf of the four o'clock movement were that men wanted a little more time for recreation, it would have appeared more like truth; but to say that it will promote the culture of the mind is a thing that will never be publicly accredited.

Admitting that certain builders named did give it freely, this is no just argument why every other employer should be bound to follow their example. These builders might be just retiring from business with independent fortunes, whilst others less fortunate in the trade might have struggled all their lifetime with difficulties. What one builder could give without injuring himself would prove the ruin of another; for the sum per week to a builder employing fifty men makes a good round sum per annum, and would be seriously felt by builders of small capital.

It is stated, that should the privilege be withdrawn, it would create a spirit of retaliation injurious to employers and employed, and open a breach that would take many years to close. The "Y. C." evidently entertains a very ill opinion of his fellow-tradesmen to think that they would offer retaliation in being

deprived of that which they, many of them, have unfairly taken from others; for, if the matter were fairly sifted, not one-third of employers have freely given it.

Supposing builders had attempted to impose another hour's labour on Saturdays, for the same wages, would the men have been sufficiently enlightened to have understood this as an imposition on the part of employers? Now, allowing fair play on both sides, what might have been said in this case might be said of the four o'clock movement, where it has been imposed contrary to the wishes of employers. I am ready to believe that there has not been sufficient time to develop its beneficial effects; but I have seen sufficient to convince me of its evil tendency, both to employers and employed. Through striking for this mere trifle, many have been thrown out of employment for months together, families deserted, and homes forsaken; and to my personal knowledge, men who have taken part in such resistance, have regretted the day that ever the subject was broached.

In conclusion, I ask workmen to take the advice of an old mason—older, perhaps, than he who takes the opposite side of the subject. Let the subject remain as quiet as you can; our trade has already been materially injured by agitation; we feel the smart of it at the present time. If the movement be, as is stated by those on the other side of the subject, beneficial to employers, they will, no doubt, in time be enabled fully to appreciate its advantages. But should we, as a body of working men, endeavour to extort by unjust means, what they are not willing to give, we shall deserve the calamities we shall bring on ourselves thereby. I trust, Sir, you will endeavour as far as possible to maintain peace, for the interests of both parties are so blended, that all agitations and disagreements must destroy the welfare of both parties.

ANOTHER OLD MASON,
And a Member of the Masons' of
London Protection Society.

THE INFLUENCE OF ANTIQUITY ON THE ARTS OF ITALY.

THE following reflections on the influence of antiquity on the literature and arts of Italy are submitted by the writer, as appearing to offer evidence in support of objections to the study of the old Masters.

Since the days of Cosmo de Medicia, when the taste for Greek literature revived in Italy, bearing along with it the taste for Greek architecture and Greek sculpture, the records of the effects of that diversion having been handed down to us by men themselves under the influences of it, there is little reason to be surprised at historians in our own country having attributed to that account the excellence attained by the Italian nation, particularly when we reflect to what an extent the pseudo classical taste pervaded Europe a few years ago, and how at this moment the classical and mediæval feeling is balanced in all that relates to æsthetics; the artist, however, who can appreciate the character which alike pervades Grecian and Gothic remains, and the philosopher who loves to trace the progress of a people towards maturity, may find matter in this subject for far different reflections, and while the one stoutly laments that want of consistency which from that time forth was to characterize Italian art, the other ought to regret that so gifted a race was not suffered to work out alone that idiosyncrasy which forms the strength of nations and periods, as well as individuals, and which operated so powerfully in bringing to a glorious climax the arts of ancient Greece.

Literature, which affects more our moral qualities, and bears less on external characteristics than her sisters, the plastic arts, may be supposed to have suffered least from the admixture, nevertheless it would be easy to trace the downfall of Italian poetry from this source, although not in immediate connection with it; for, notwithstanding that the love of nature in the first instance may have enabled Lorenzo di Medici and some few others to keep pace with the current, yet that it ultimately proved too strong is attested by the misdirected efforts of the Latin poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to revive a literature in a language foreign to their feelings, and by the

* In a leading article on the subject, the *Herald* said,—
"This proposal, to fill up the open space of one of our squares, seems to us so alarming, that we cannot help wishing that the public at large may interfere, and insist on having every possible open space reserved, which now exists. It is not in these large and public places merely that we would insist on maintaining things as they are, but in many a nice private and secluded spot, where open gardens and gardens are becoming gradually covered with dwellings; and thus the metropolis is turned into one dense, close, heavy mass of buildings, through which the winds of heaven find it almost impossible to penetrate. In our opinion, a law might be justified by the first of all considerations,—the public good,—which should wholly and peremptorily forbid any such addition to existing buildings in the metropolis; and should ordain that every vacant space, heretofore unoccupied by houses, should remain so until specially exempted from such prohibition by a distinct Act of Parliament."